MEMOIR

OF

MARY JANE.

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AMERICAN TRACT
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PUBLISHED UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE

REV. JOHN BURDER.

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THE following narrative relates to a little girl who died near Stroud, England, in the year 1834, aged eight years. Her pastor, the Rev. JOHN BURDER, in giving his testimony to the authenticity of the memoir, says,

"Although, in common perhaps with almost every other Christian minister, it has been my happiness to meet with many instances of early piety, I am not aware that any case equally in-

structive and impressive with that which these pages describe, has come under my notice. In this case, too, the parents were not only attentive, and as far as affection would allow, impartial spectators, but were capable of putting on paper, in a distinct manner, many of the words of their dear departed child, as well as the impression which her character had made on their 'sorrowful yet rejoicing' hearts. The greater part of the narrative was written by the parents.

"One of the many interesting features of this case is, that the piety of this child apparently began at the very early age of five years, if not sooner; and that consequently it is not merely the dying experience, but the living character of a pious child which we here record.

"Another circumstance which will impart to the narrative additional interest, in the opinion of all who love truth and candor, is, that no effort has been made to heighten the coloring of the picture; on the contrary, great pains have been taken to adhere exactly to matter of fact, not merely with regard to the substance of the memoir, but, as far as possible, in the most minute circumstances."

Mary Jane was endowed with an excellent understanding, as her questions and answers, and her style of speaking, which was far above her years.

plainly showed. But this was her lowest recommendation. Our faculties are the gift of God, and we are accountable only for the use we make of them. What was most to be admired with regard to her understanding, was, that though she knew her powers, she never made a show of them. It was only accidentally that even her parents became acquainted with the extent of the information she had acquired.

Mary Jane had also a very pleasant countenance; but neither is this circumstance very important. It is not the face but the heart which God regards.

Mary Jane, like every other human being, had a heart which by nature was prone to evil. She was naturally inclined to be self-willed; but by the blessing of God on the pains which were taken with her, and on the pains she took with herself, this temper was almost wholly eradicated, or showed itself only in the desirable form of firmness and decision in well-doing.

She was very careful to speak the truth. When about six years of age, while engaged in serious conversation with her mother on the nature of pardon, she was asked if she had the recollection of any particular sins. After pausing awhile she answered, evidently much concerned, "Mamma, I believe I once told a lie." The fault had been

forgotten by every one except herself, and when the circumstances of the case were explained, it was found that what had dwelt so long on her mind—it is believed for more than a year—was not an absolute falsehood, but an equivocation, which, though decidedly wrong, many persons, adults as well as children, would have deemed hardly worthy of being remembered at all, far less of being so long remembered with sorrow.

Mary Jane sometimes complained of being disturbed by the younger children, and would read till they were asleep, that she might pray without interruption. She requested her mother to grant her a room to herself. Her mother did not accede to this request, but told her to come whenever she liked to her room, which afterwards she often did with great pleasure; and when six years and a half old, she would frequently seclude herself in the shrubbery for hours, with a book, which she enjoyed in that retirement, as she was then exempt from the bustle of the nursery.

Her parents can refer to many seasons when she evinced great spirituality of mind, and extraordinary delight in religious conversation. She also felt considerable interest in missionary exertions, and has sometimes very cheerfully made little sacrifices in order to contribute a trifle to that object.

She delighted much in reading; but the books which she usually selected were different from those which most children prefer. She read through Josephus, and most of Fox's Book of Martyrs. Brooks' Remedies against the Devices of Satan was a great favorite with her, as was also Dr. Bogue on the Millennium. James' Family Monitor, and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, were likewise among her chosen books.

About a year before her death she was much concerned that she had so long lived in the neglect of the Saviour's command, "Do this in remembrance of me." On her mother's telling her that it was addressed to the disciples of Jesus; that she must give decided evidence of piety before she could be admitted to the sacramental table, and that she was too young, she replied, "Mamma, when do you think I shall be old enough? Jesus does not mention any particular age. Will you promise that I may as soon as you think I am converted? I should not like to tell a minister that I was converted; would you tell him about it, mamma?"

Prayer never seemed a task to her; she would at times express herself in very appropriate language, and with much real feeling. On one occasion, when she had no idea of any one being near her parents were quite astonished to hear her pe-

titions, the subjects being of vital importance, and offered up with all the fervor and devotion of an old Christian. Her ideas seemed quite beyond the capacity of a child; and when at the request of Catherine, a younger sister, she began to teach her how to pray, she accommodated her language to her sister's understanding in such a way as evidently showed she viewed the exercise as more than a form of unmeaning words. She made Catherine repeat several petitions after her, and then said, "You must now think for yourself." Catherine said, "What must I think?" "Think of your sins, of your wants, and pray from your own heart: my praying wont do you any good."

At midsummer, 1833, Mary Jane was placed under the care of the Misses Atkinson, in Stroud; and it is believed that during her five months' residence in that town, the instruction she received at school and in church, in connection with her own reading, was the means of increasing both her knowledge of religion and her relish for it. Her deportment at school was gentle, obedient, and affectionate, and was evidently the result of Christian principle strongly imbuing her mind. Both as a pupil and a companion in the school-room she was a lovely character, and her death has consequently occasioned no small sorrow.

Just before the vacation, Mr. Burder gave, ac-

cording to custom, a parting address to the girls, of whom Mary Jane was one, and was led to speak at greater length than usual on the brevity of life, and on the possibility that they might never meet again, as well as on the excellence of religion.

Two days afterwards Mary Jane returned to her beloved parents. The flush of health was on her cheek, and on entering the house, such was the buoyancy of her spirits, that she danced for joy. Little did her parents then imagine that their habitation was so soon to become the house of mourning.

On Wednesday, Dec. 18, exactly a week after her return, while playing in the garden, she took cold, and the next day was very unwell. On Saturday she seemed to have recovered, and went to bed about nine o'clock, in excellent spirits; but very early next morning she awoke in a fit of coughing, and had severe pain in the chest. Medical help was obtained, and occasionally a gleam of hope of her recovery was enjoyed; but on the whole the disorder increased upon her, and finally issued in her removal from beloved and weeping friends, to the Saviour who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom.

Her thirst for reading seemed to increase with her sufferings. When advised to read less, she

would say, "I must have a book, papa; it is the only thing to make me forget my pain."

In answer to a question put to her by her dear mother, she said, "I think, mamma, I never felt the burden of sin so much as I did some months ago, while hearing a sermon;" and on being further questioned with regard to the meaning of the expression she had used, she said, "It was a great weight on my mind; I felt very sad."

Conversing with her father respecting a printed sermon which had greatly interested her, on the text, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" and observing her father was affected, she said, "Papa, why do you weep? don't cry, papa, it hurts me so much." He replied, "My dear child, your father weeps because he sees you suffer so much, and cannot relieve you." She answered, "Christ suffered more." At another time, when her pain was very severe, she said, "My pains are great, but it is God's will, and his will be done." It is observable that from that time, with only one exception, she always, when addressing her parent, called him father; probably from the religious associations which, in consequence of the above-cited conversation, that word awakened in her mind.

The first evening after she was taken ill, she desired her nurse to read to her, and said, "Ann,

read me that psalm, 'Search me, O God, and try me.'" Psalm 139. But when she found that the young woman could not at once turn to it, she said, "Never mind; read the tenth chapter of John, about the good Shepherd." Being asked if she thought herself one of Christ's flock, she replied, "I hope so, mamma, but am not quite sure; that is what I want to know." On several occasions, when asked what she particularly wished her parents to pray for, on her behalf, she would say, "That my sins may be pardoned; that I may be made fit for heaven; that I may be sure I am converted." And two or three times she asked her father to pray that she might have a full assurance that her sins were pardoned.

On the evening of the Lord's day preceding her death, being much exhausted from the application of leeches, she said, "The easy-chair, mamma." Her mother, supposing that she wished to be placed in it, said, "No, my dear, it will not do." "Well, there's an easier seat than that, mamma." "Where, my dear?" "In heaven." "Do you think, my dear, that you will be in heaven soon?" "I think I shall, mamma: I am drawing near to death." Perceiving that her mother was much affected, she lifted up her withered arm, and stroking her mother's face with her hand, said, in the most endearing manner, "Mourn not for me, dearest

mamma; rather rejoice: Jesus will comfort you when I am gone. We shall meet again at the right hand of God."

Her mother asked if she had prayed that day. She answered that she thought she had not. Her mother remarked that it had been a day of bustle and confusion, but as all was then still and quiet, she would do well to take advantage of the opportunity for prayer; to which she readily assented. Her mother then said, "You have often, my darling, prayed before me when in health; I should like to hear you pray now, if you feel quite willing to pray aloud." She answered, "If you wish it, I will, mamma;" and then in a very feeling manner offered the following petitions: "Blessed Jesus, do thou take away my sinful heart, and give me a heart of flesh. Jesus, do thou wash me in thy own blood; and O, Jesus, do thou give me a full assurance that when I die thou wilt take me to heaven. And, Jesus, do thou comfort my parents when I am gone. Make me kind to my brothers and sisters. Jesus, do thou teach them the way to heaven, that we may all meet at thy right hand. Jesus, do thou make me more patient and kind to those who attend me; and O, give me a full assurance that my sins are pardoned."

Her mother then said, "I have often told you,

my dear, of what importance it is to pray from the heart; but I need not ask you if this is from the heart; I am sure it is." With much energy she said, "Yes, mamma, indeed it is."

Afterwards she requested her mother, as a particular favor, to distribute her books among the various members of the family, specifying the particular book or books which she wished each to have. She was at a loss to fix on a suitable book for her sister Ellen, who was only two months old, and of whom she had seen but little. On her mamma saying, "Ellen will never remember you, my dear," she replied, "No, mamma, but I wish to remember her."

When she had finished the distribution of her books, she said with a smile, "Mamma, this is like making my will." Her mother said, "Have you just thought of it, my darling?" She answered, "No, mamma; it is some days since I first thought of it." "Why did you not name it before, my dear?" "I did not like to, mamma: I knew you would feel hurt."

She manifested a most delightful feeling of affection towards her parents; she would sometimes say, "What could I do without you? You are my best friends." After having received any little attention from her parents, her eye would affectionately fix upon them, and with a pleasing

expression of thoughtfulness on her countenance, she would say, "If I should recover, and you should ever be ill, I would pay you every attention in my power."

During her illness she invariably spoke of heaven as the home where she expected finally to meet her friends; she liked to speak of heaven.

At different times Mary Jane's remarks, and her artless and earnest prayers, left a most pleasing impression on the minds of her friends. At one time when Mary Jane had concluded a very earnest prayer, her mother, much affected, said, "My love, I can have no doubt now that you are one of Christ's lambs." The dear child replied, with an emphasis and feeling almost too much for a parent's heart to bear,

> "Is he a Door? I'll enter in;
> Behold the pastures large and green,
> A paradise divinely fair—
> None but the sheep have freedom there."

"My love," said her mother, weeping, "that is beautiful language, but it is the peculiar adaptation of it that makes it so delightful to me." On which she looked up, and quoted the following verse:

> "Is he a Sun? His beams are grace,
> His course is joy and righteousness;
> Nations rejoice when he appears,
> To chase their clouds and dry their tears."

Observing the joy which the recital of these verses occasioned, she said, "I can tell you, dear mamma, the texts they are taken from," several of which she then named. Soon after this, mention was made of a little impatience she had at times manifested during her severe affliction, and she was exhorted to bear patiently all that her heavenly Father appointed her to suffer. She then repeated from the same beautiful hymn, the lines,

"Is he a Fire? He'll purge my dross,
But the true gold sustains no loss.
Like a refiner shall he sit,
And tread the refuse with his feet."

The last two lines of the following stanza were spoken with peculiar emphasis:

"Is he a Vine? His heavenly root
Supplies the boughs with life and fruit.
O let a lasting union join
My soul the branch, to Christ the Vine!"

She concluded with the following; having observed, in her quotations from the hymn, not the order of the verses as they stand in the book, but the order suggested by the circumstances of herself and her dear parents.

"Is he a Way? He leads to God,
His path is drawn in lines of blood;
There would I walk with hope and zeal,
Till I arrive at Zion's hill."

Of the sermons she had recently heard, she made particular mention of one on the text, "The bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." And a sermon on prayer, considered as the means of obtaining the blessing of God, from the text, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Her parents often conversed with her on the subject of the atonement, and, considering her age, she seemed to have a clear understanding of its nature.

At her death, two funeral discourses were de livered; and seldom have so many tears been shed on the departure of a child, as on the occasion of the decease of this beloved and pious girl. May many dear children, on reading this memoir, be induced to pray to God for that pardoning mercy, and that new heart, which he alone can give.

Some of you, my dear young friends, will die before many more years have passed away. Have you repented of sin? Do you love and trust in the blessed Saviour? Are you trying to please God?

If you desire to love him, there can be no doubt that he is willing to bless you, for he casts out none that come to him. "The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench."

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